

## Editor's Note

One day, at the moment I boarded a train, I noticed an AC Japan (Advertising Council Japan) hanging poster with the following line printed on it: "Cuddling support, from Japan." A man that appears to be Japanese is on his knees and shaking hands with a black woman holding a baby while seated in a wheelchair. Looking at this photograph, an IDACA project

currently underway in Myanmar suddenly came to my mind. The key word here is also "cuddling support." Regardless of how much financial support you provide, it simply appears as the arrogance of developed countries if there is nothing that resonates in the hearts of the people there. It makes me think about the significance of international cooperation.



### Request:

To all ex-IDACA participants

Dear Mr. and Ms. IDACA Alumni:

IDACA wishes, above all, that its ties with you remain solid and long-lasting. So, why not keep us updated on your recent status and how we can reach you.

Please write us if your place of work, your position or your address have changed. There is no specific form that you have to follow in sending the information, but the following may serve as an example. We would appreciate it so much if you could mail (or e-mail) or fax it to IDACA, for the attention of Eiko Oshita.

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Name (nationality):  | _____ |
| Training course / Seminar  | _____ |
| Changes  | _____ |
| 1) New address (home, telephone number and fax number):                          | _____ |
| 2) New place of work (office, telephone number, fax number, and e-mail address): | _____ |
| 3) New position:   | _____ |

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# IDACA NEWS

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## REPORT ON THE IDACA MYANMAR PROJECT

### Farmers Field School (FFS) Initiative Directed Toward Creating Farming Calendars

#### Environment surrounding the Village's Major Crops (Rice +α)

Rice and green grams (mung beans) are the major crops in Sin Ma Kaw Village, which is the Project's site located near Yangon, while rice and chili are the major crops in Tha Pyay Thar Village, which is in the central dry zone located 300 miles north of Yangon.

The people of Myanmar consume 140 kg of rice in a year, or just about twice that consumed by the Japanese. However, the price of rice in Myanmar is sluggish as in Japan. Due to ethnic conflicts that occurred near the border with China in autumn two years ago, rice could no longer be exported to China, and consequently the price of rice dropped to half of that of the previous year.

For farmers, this meant that

their farming business would be unviable if they only cultivated rice. However, it is difficult to find any other crop superior to rice for growing during the rainy season. Therefore, green grams and chili, which are dry season crops, account for most of the farmers' income.

Green grams serve as the base for curry exported to India, etc. In addition, the pods are



Green grams (Sin Ma Kaw Village)

### Table of Contents

#### REPORT ON THE IDACA MYANMAR PROJECT

Farmers Field School (FFS) – Initiative Directed  
Toward Creating Farming Calendars ----- 1

#### REPORTS ON TRAINING COURSES

(1) FY2017 1st ICA-Japan Training Course on  
"Empowering Women in Business and  
Management of Agricultural Cooperatives" ----- 3  
(2) FY2017 1st ICA-Japan Training Course on "Fostering  
Agricultural Cooperatives for Food Value Chain" ----- 4  
(3) FY2017 JICA Training Course on Agricultural  
Policy (A) ----- 4

#### REPORT ON COMMISSIONED TRAINING COURSE

Matters Re-Acknowledged from the JICA Training  
"Tanzania Local Agricultural Development" ----- 5

#### REPORTS ON VISITORS TO IDACA FROM OVERSEAS AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

(1) Visit to IDACA by the Chairman of the National  
Cooperative Federation of Nepal (NCF/N) ----- 6  
(2) Visit to IDACA by Officers and Employees of the  
Malaysia Cooperative Societies Commission (MCSC)---- 7  
(3) Visit to IDACA by Officers and Employees of the  
Malaysian National Co-operative Movement (ANGKASA)--7

usually picked by hand at two different times, making it difficult to consider employing machines to do the job.

In addition to labor shortage during the harvest season amid the accelerated outflow of the labor force in the Thilawa special economic zone near Sin Ma Kaw Village, seeds are planted at a time when moisture remains in the soil during the beginning of the dry season. This is the greatest reason for introducing combines so that rice harvesting can be completed as early as possible.

Meanwhile, the chilis grown in Tha Pyay Thar Village are round chillis, a local specialty, rather than the familiar elongated type.



Chilis (Tha Pyay Thar Village)

In recent years, these chillis have maintained high value because of their rich flavor.

For these reasons, although the crops in the two villages are different, fertilization management and cultivation management for increasing yield and reducing costs are important, and keeping the soil in good condition is the vital point of farm management techniques.

### Creation and Dissemination of Farming Calendars

Continuing to carry out initiatives centering on exhibition fields, we have so far created farming calendars for chillis and two kinds of rice (planting by hand: Tha Pyay Thar Village; direct sowing: Sin Ma Kaw Village). By incorporating a simplified method of measuring soil characteristics, the amount of soil improvement agents, fertilizers (manure before sowing, additional fertilizer, fertilizer for head-sprouting), pesticides, etc., the calendars came to consist of eight pages. The calendars are printed on vinyl sheets so that they can be used in rainy/windy conditions

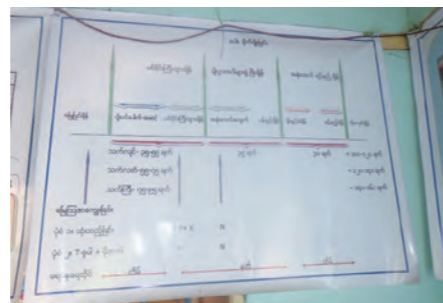
Currently, we are aiming at the creation of farming calendars based on cultivation technology that will enable three-time or four-time harvesting of green grams in Sin Ma Kaw Village. As we have come up with measures to improve soil fertility (water retention capacity) by utilizing “chaff charcoal” for soil improvement as well as the optimum time for fertilizer application, the prospects now seem brighter.

Recently, India, which has been a major export destination for green grams, announced a regulation on the total import volume, and the price has consequently fallen to about half, the people of Sin Ma Kaw Village are saying that they have to find an alternative crop. However, we believe that farming calendars, which begin with soil fertility (water retention capacity) improvement, are effective as they are universally applicable to other crops.



Using video to explain how to make chaff charcoal

Initially, we had in mind the creation of farming calendars based on collaboration between extension offices/experiment stations and primary agricultural cooperatives, which is commonplace in Japan. However, since we could not see the actual situation of guidance by the Department of Agriculture (DOA), which should be in charge of extension activities in Myanmar, we decided to engage in the creation and dissemination of IDACA Myanmar Office’s own farming calendars.



Farming calendar (one of a total of eight pages)

### “Okareta basho de sakinasai” (Bloom where God has planted you)

In this country, there has yet to be established an extension system with extension workers serving as the core for disseminating the results of research and development at testing stations, organization and grouping of farm households for effective extension, and a macro-level technical management cycle for providing feedback regarding on-site practical work to research and development agencies. Therefore, our activities are somewhat like the paddling of ducks (calm on the surface, but always paddling and working hard underneath).

Moreover, the soil conditions in the two villages where the project is being undertaken are strongly acidic, strongly alkaline,

and highly basic. However, even in strongly alkaline and highly basic land, it is possible to secure safe drinking water by digging 30 meters or more underground. If projects move forward and “joint-use fountains (wells)” are realized, the role of cooperatives will come to be recognized by the villagers in an easy-to-understand form.

Holding on to such a dream, we can relate more easily to the words “Bloom where God has planted you” (by Ms. Kazuko Watanabe, President of Notre Dame Seishin University).



A backhoe that is doing a great job in repairing roads in Tha Pyay Thar Village [Grant from the Government of Japan]

Note: This project is being undertaken with support under the Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Partnership Projects provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## REPORTS ON TRAINING COURSES

### (1) FY2017 1st ICA-Japan Training Course on “Empowering Women in Business and Management of Agricultural Cooperatives”

In this training targeting Southeast Asian women, the theme was renewed from this fiscal year, and it was carried out with the focus on practical business in addition to women’s activities such as organizational management and business start-ups. The participants were eight female government officials and leaders involved in cooperatives. They arrived in Japan after participating in training for 10 days in Thailand. During their



With the President, officers, and employees of JA Saitama Hibikino

16-day stay in Japan from July 26, the participants deepened their understanding of the businesses of agricultural cooperatives and the activities of JA women’s associations. For

field study visits, the participants visited Saitama Prefecture. With cooperation from the people at JA Saitama Prefectural Union, JA Saitama Chuo, and JA Saitama Hibikino, the participants were allowed to observe initiatives by



With the members of JA Saitama Chuo Women’s Association’s processing group “Minori Kobo”

JA women’s associations in welfare and processing businesses, as well as farming facilities such as direct sales shops and fruit sorting facilities. The visits turned out to be an opportunity for the participants to acquire many ideas about such matters as the spirit of “caring about each other” in the activities of women’s groups, how to increase added value through fruit sorting

and processing, and production and sales based on market needs. In addition, in the second half of the training course, the participants visited the Education Center of JA Kanagawa Prefectural Union, JA Hadano, and fruit production

farmers. They were able to hear a wide range of comments ranging from personnel aspects such as education for JA officials and employees and their relationships with members of cooperatives to fruit cultivation and marketing.

## (2) FY2017 1st ICA-Japan Training Course on “Fostering Agricultural Cooperatives for Food Value Chain”

The above-titled training course was held from September 13 to October 6, 2017 with participation by eight people from India, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, and Thailand, which are the more developed countries in Southeast Asia and South Asia, where the organization of agricultural cooperatives has relatively progressed. The training course was aimed at contributing to the development of the organization and improving the quality of life of cooperative members by promoting the creation of a food value chain through strengthening the businesses of cooperatives, with priority placed on training on the farm management and economic business conducted by Japanese agricultural cooperatives.



Visit to the home of Mr. Hamanaka, a member of the JA Hachioji Passion Fruit Producers' group; participants visiting his field and receiving a briefing

In order to learn about the mechanism of distribution and sales of agricultural products in Japan, the participants visited Ota Wholesale Market and ZEN-NOH Fresh Produce Marketing Corporation. In addition, they visited JA Matsumoto Highland in Nagano Prefecture and received training on such matters as the process from production to collection and shipment of vegetables and fruits, as well as

the roles of farm advisers.

In Shizuoka Prefecture, the participants visited the Shizuoka Prefectural Agricultural Training Center of the JA Shizuoka Prefectural Union, JA Enshu-Chuo, JA Mikkabi, etc. to take a closer look at the business activities of agricultural cooperatives. At a melon production farm within the jurisdiction of JA Enshu-Chuo, the participants had the opportunity to taste melons priced at more than 10,000 yen a piece, while at JA Mikkabi, they all expressed admiration at secret stories behind high-quality Aoshima mandarin oranges.

In addition, as a case example of unique activities of producer groups, the participants observed the activities of the JA Hachioji Passion Fruit Producers' Group, which has been conducting community building activities, taking advantage of passion fruits by utilizing crowdfunding. They also had the opportunity to listen to comments from restaurants and cake shops supporting the activities. The participants studied the case examples of cooperation among different industries and their contributions to the revitalization of the local communities, and thus reacknowledged the importance of collaborative activities.



Visit to a greenhouse owned by Mr. Nagata, a melon farmer; participants tasted melons priced at more than 10,000 yen a piece in the market price!

## (3) FY2017 JICA Training Course on Agricultural Policy (A)

Targeting director-generals and deputy director-generals belonging to government

agencies having jurisdiction over agricultural administration at central and local govern-

ments and directly involved in policymaking, this training course is aimed at having them understand the history and current situation of agricultural policies in Japan, and various government support systems and legal systems that support Japanese agriculture, as well as have them acquire useful knowledge for formulating policies toward resolving issues related to farming in their own countries while learning from each other through lectures and tours concerning policymaking and making comparisons and holding discussions on relevant initiatives in the participating countries.

During the current fiscal year, this training course was conducted between November 5 and November 18, 2017, with participation by 11 administrative officials from countries in Asia, Africa, Oceania, and Central America. The participants learned about such matters as an overview of Japanese agriculture and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, the “Basic Plan for Food, Agriculture, and Rural Areas,” agricultural policymaking process in Japan and changes in Japan’s agricultural policies, case studies of policy support by Japan in Myanmar and South Sudan, and an overview of agricultural cooperatives in Japan. In study visits, where the participants actually visit farming sites, the participants visited Hyogo Prefecture and learned about the Pre-



In front of the Inami grain elevator at JA Hyogo Minami

fectural Government’s action plan called “Hyogo Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries Vision,” and toured such places as the Hyogo Prefectural Technology Center for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Roadside Station Kobe Fruit & Flower Park Ozo, Yamada Nishiki no Yakata (a comprehensive tourist facility themed on rice for sake brewery, Yamada Nishiki), Kobe City Central Wholesale Market, and JA Hyogo Minami and its related facilities. Based on the knowledge they gained through this training course in Japan, the participants drew up proposals for resolving relevant issues and making improvements to existing agricultural policies in their own countries, and subsequently left for home.

## REPORT ON COMMISSIONED TRAINING COURSE

### Matters Re-Acknowledged from the JICA Training “Tanzania Local Agricultural Development”



Yukio Abe, Consultant for Overseas Cooperative Development

This is a training course commissioned by JICA Kansai to Pacific Ocean Resource Exchange Center (PREX), a public-interest corporation operated with donations from 97 private companies with the Kansai region as a base of their operations, as well as from local governments spread across Osaka, Hyogo, and Kyoto Prefectures.

Entering its fourth year, the training course was held this time from July 24 to August 4, 2017. As there was a request from PREX, IDACA became involved in this training, and I was assigned as a course leader. From this experience, I made comments on how I facilitated the participants. The training course created by PREX was a challenging one with substantial content such as evaluation meetings after each day of training and writing reports by participants own volition that took until late at night.

Since we are engaged in similar tasks even at IDACA, the training techniques are not all that different, and what I have in mind



Striding through the street wearing the national costume of Tanzania



All participants in a group photo with the Akashi Kaikyo Bridge in the background

daily regarding dealing with participants from developing countries is as follows. That is an approach based on the words of wisdom by Mother Teresa: “When you are troubled in life and want to rouse your mind or ease your heart, go love a person.” Encountering these words, I strove to approach the participants with “Teacher of Love” as my creed. Since then, through trial and error over several decades, I have practiced it in the following manner. In other words, 1. Rather than regarding each participant as a single participant, consider the person as a valued customer or a friend; 2. Try to meet the needs as much as possible in both public and

private; 3. Bear in mind to know well the conditions in the participating countries and the circumstances in Japan; 4. I have been trying to introduce coaching and assertive training curriculums that place priority on role playing to encourage awareness and self-transformation of the participants rather than just having them acquire professional knowledge.

Cases are seen in which the action plans that the participants have drawn up at the end of the training course cannot be executed after they return to their home countries due to various obstacles. However, when participants, who have received a lot of excitement and inspiration from the training in Japan, send us messages saying that they are “giving guidance to farmers with love,” I feel that what we have been doing is worthwhile, and at the same time,



that I must continue to stick to this belief.

Giving individual guidance on action plans in response to participants' requests

## REPORTS ON VISITORS TO IDACA FROM OVERSEAS AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

### (1) Visit to IDACA by the Chairman of the National Cooperative Federation of Nepal (NCF/N)

At this time, we received consultation through the Japan Cooperative General Research Institute for accepting a visit by the Chairman of the National Cooperative Federation of Nepal (NCF/N), which is the apex organization of cooperatives in Nepal, for paying a courtesy call and making an observation tour. In



Surrounding the NCF/N Chairman (third person from the right)

considering the acceptance of the visit, we found out that there would be four participants including the Chairman and the Vice Chairman of the NCF/N.

During their stay in Japan from October 2 to October 6, 2017, the visitors visited IDACA on October 3, and conducted field study visits in Nagano Prefecture from the afternoon of October 4 to the morning of October 5, with the cooperation of JA Nagano Prefectural Union and JA Nagano. As they had the opportunity to study the organization and businesses of JA Nagano within a limited time of one day in reality, the participants, including the Chairman, commented that they were impressed with the JA's activities that are deeply involved with the promotion of local agriculture and the livelihood of the JA members.

The participants then returned to Tokyo and met with JA-Zenchu President Nakaya and JA-Zenchu officers and employees.

### (2) Visit to IDACA by Officers and Employees of the Malaysia Cooperative Societies Commission (MCSC)

Malaysia Cooperative Societies Commission is one of the specialized agencies under the Ministry of Domestic Trade, Co-operatives and Consumerism, and along with the Cooperative college of Malaysia, it plays a role in promoting cooperatives in that country.

The members of the Commission came to Japan primarily for a visit to the “Japanese Consumers’ Cooperative Union,” and it was aimed at “investigating the current situation of consumer cooperatives in Japan and initiatives related to supply chains, as well as studying the possibility of creating networks for partnership businesses between Malaysian and Japanese consumer cooperatives as an initiative for the future.”

Although a visit to IDACA was not included in the original plan, a Commission member who had participated in a training course at IDACA reportedly strongly recommended “a visit to IDACA.” As a result, a total of nearly



With MCSC officers and employees at the IDACA lobby

20 people called on IDACA on October 20 for a short time from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. After their arrival, we introduced our institution and took them on a tour of the facilities. As a training course commissioned by JICA was underway on the same day, we had the Commission members observe the training. While it was a short time, this served as an opportunity to confirm and strengthen the relations with Malaysia.

### (3) Visit to IDACA by Officers and Employees of the Malaysian National Co-operative Movement (ANGKASA)

On December 12, 2017, nine members (including officers and employees) of the Malaysian National Co-operative Movement (ANGKASA) visited IDACA, and we renewed the long-standing friendship between ANGKASA and IDACA. We set up an opportunity for active exchange of opinions in the form of a question-and-answer session concerning such matters as the current situation surrounding agriculture in Japan, initiatives of the JA Group concerning export and import of agricultural products, and the operation of education centers and international

training centers. We confirmed that we would continue to mutually cooperate and contribute to the development of the cooperative movement in the two countries in the future.



With ANGKASA officers/employees delegation and IDACA officers/employees (the woman in the center is a former IDACA participant)